

Ferreira cafe

Carlos Ferreira and Roberta Sudbrack

I am so proud and excited that my fellow countrywoman, [Roberta Sudbrack](#), is coming to Montreal - she'll definitely be one of the Highlights Festival biggest stars. As many know, this year, Montreal's winter festival will focus on women. In the gastronomic side of things, this means the city will be filled with women chefs and winemakers, each cooking at a different restaurant. Sudbrack is one of the boldface names, alongside [Anne-Sophie Pic](#) — the only female chef in France with three Michelin stars — who agreed to preside over the event.



[The description of chef Sudbrack on the official Festival website](#) is very far from ideal, so let me explain, in a few words, who she is. Chef Sudbrack is one of the five top chefs in Brazil, and used to be the personal chef of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brasília, Brazil's capital. Today she lives in Rio and is chef-owner of her eponymous restaurant, consistently rated one of the best in town (alongside Claude Troisgros's Olympe, in the same district, and Fasano's Al Mare). Chef Sudbrack writes for Gula, a food magazine, and is also a huge Twitter celebrity, tweeting live to her many thousands of followers from her kitchen every night, describing things as they arrive, go into the ovens, hit the frying pans, etc., with exceptional lyricism.



Although my last dinner at [Roberta Sudbrack](#) wasn't perfect from beginning to end, it did hit very high notes and was one of the best I've had in Rio. Here is the report I wrote at the time...



Until I went for dinner at [Roberta Sudbrack's](#) restaurant, I hadn't fully understood what all the fuss was about. What a dinner! The only thing that ever came close, in Rio, was dinner at Claude Troisgros' Olympe with the man himself, but then again... how could it not be great, right?



Dinner started with amazing breads, warm from the oven, the best butter and perfect little gougères, warm fluffy pastry clouds.



Our tasting menu started with her signature okra "caviar": the seeds mimic that ploc-ploc mouthfeel. Alongside, shrimp, brunoise of tomato and a generous drizzle of an outstading olive oil.



The same incredible oil was present in the next dish, tuna in a very light confit (chef says she doesn't do it sous vide, but simply does a quick version of the traditional confit mehod, using olive oil). The paper thin toasted bread gave the ensemble the needed crunch.

Then came a very delicate broth made with lagostim shells, in a bowl similar to those used by Brazilian indians. In it came mushrooms and fat morsels of lagostim (a small cousin of the lobster). Uncannily light and complex, each individual flavour alive and whole.



The main course had been pre-ordered by food lover and blogger Constance Escobar. Suckling pig with ever-so-tender flesh and a golden, crisp crust. As a side, an impossibly silky portion of mashed potatoes, Robuchon style. An aside: to see a full report of this same dinner on Constance's blog, please [click here](#). We were content - very content - but still hungry for more.



I'm a bit ashamed to confess that I asked for seconds of our first dessert, the best banana ice cream I've ever had. It's made with the ripest bananas Roberta can find - their peels full of black spots already - and nothing more, not even sugar. Banana in its purest possible guise.



The second dessert had, of course, to be an anti-climax. It was a donut-style pastry dusted with sugar and paired with crème anglaise. Good, not great. And what could I possibly say about the mignardises? Beautiful, dainty, delicious. Candied marmelo (a Brazilian fruit), chocolate candies that tasted of an old childhood treat called Kri. Brigadeiro, another childhood favourite, in a spoon. Mignardises comfort-chics.



It was a perfect dinner. Perfect company, perfect food, perfect wine (Chassagne Montrachet Vieilles Vignes 2005, Pilot, Bourgogne, app. US\$ 130/bottle).

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